

Appl. No. 10/692,135  
Amendment and Response to Office Action of 11/30/2004

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The listing of claims shall replace all prior versions and listings of the claims in the subject application. Claims 1 - 20 are cancelled without prejudice.

**Listing of the Claims:**

1-20 (canceled)

21. (New) An apparatus for holding the mouth of a flexible bag open, the apparatus comprising:

a generally rigid self supporting first member forming a continuous D-shaped loop;

a second member forming a continuous D-shaped loop, and being adapted to matingly receive the first member along substantially the entire periphery of the first member in a generally parallel orientation to each other with an entire periphery of the flexible bag proximate the mouth sandwiched therebetween;

wherein the first and second members are completely removable from each other.

22. (New) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein the first member and the second member have complimentary cross sections that snapably lock together when pressed against each other to secure the portion of the bag sandwiched therebetween.

23. (New) The apparatus of claim 22, wherein at least one side of the first member parallel to the direction of motion when the two members are press-fitted together is one of concave or convex and at least one interior side of the second member corresponding to the at least one side of the first member is the other of the concave and convex.

24. (New) The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the second member includes one or more hook members, the hook members being integrally formed with the second member and adapted to latch against the first member.

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25. (New) The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the first member has at least one of a protrusion and a depression formed on at least one side thereof; and wherein at least one interior side of the second member has the other of at least one of the protrusion and the depression, the other of the protrusion and the depression corresponding to said at least one of a protrusion and a depression.

26. (New) The apparatus of claim 25, wherein the at least one protrusion comprises a ridge, the ridge extending circumferentially around at least a portion of the first member, and the depression comprises a groove, the groove extending circumferentially around at least a portion of the second member.

27. (New) An apparatus to hold the mouth of a flexible bag open, the apparatus comprising:

a support loop forming a continuous D-shape comprising a generally rigid self supporting material and having a generally rectangular cross section; and

a retaining loop forming a continuous D-shape comprising a generally rigid and resilient material, the retaining loop having a generally U-shaped cross section defining a slot, the slot being sized to tightly receive the support loop with substantially the entire periphery of a portion of the flexible bag proximate the mouth wrapped around the support loop;

wherein the support loop and retaining loop are completely removable from each other.

28. (New) The apparatus of claim 27, wherein the first member and the second member have complimentary cross sections that snapably lock together when pressed against each other to secure the portion of the bag sandwiched therebetween.

29. (New) The apparatus of claim 28, wherein at least one side of the support loop parallel to the direction of motion when the two members are press-fitted together is one of concave or convex and at least one interior side of the of the slot of the retaining loop

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corresponding to the at least one side of the support loop is the other of the concave and convex.

30. (New) The apparatus of claim 28, wherein the second member includes one or more hook members, the hook members being integrally formed with the second member and adapted to latch against the first member.

31. (New) The apparatus of claim 27, wherein the support loop has at least one of a protrusion and a depression formed on at least one side thereof; and wherein at least one interior side of the slot has the other of at least one of the protrusion and the depression, the other of the protrusion and the depression corresponding to said at least one of a protrusion and a depression.

32. (New) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein the at least one protrusion comprises a ridge, the ridge extending circumferentially around at least a portion of the support loop, and the depression comprises a groove, the groove extending circumferentially around at least a portion of the retaining loop.